Renegade Press

PRESENTS

2.00 IN CANADA
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# WORD SMITH

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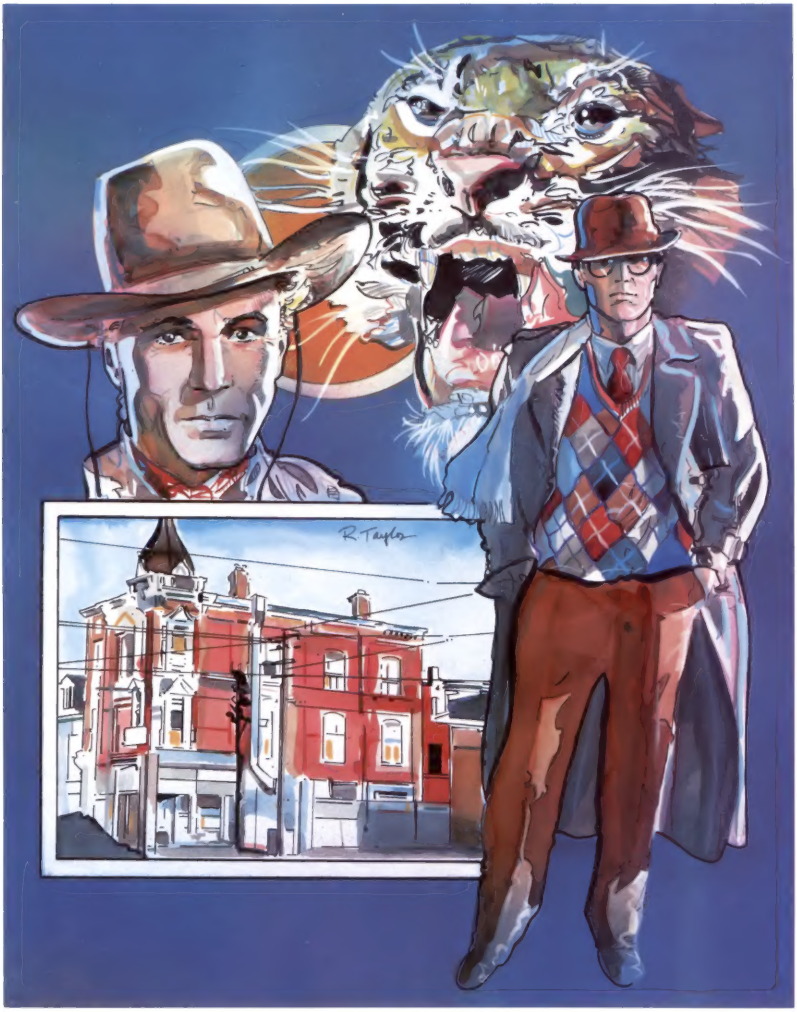

# A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

Welcome to Renegade Press's newest member, *Wordsmith!* This is a book that took over a year to get into your hands. Last summer I was a guest at MapleCon in Ottawa—Canada's major convention. As usual, I spent some time looking at the portfolios of various artists, either giving them advice and feedback on their progress, or looking at different series proposals. One of these people was Dave Darrigo. He had a series proposal called "The Dandy," which looked interesting, but I wasn't sure it would sell. We talked a bit, and he showed me a few ideas he had for one or two other series. "Wordsmith" caught my eye. I told him that if he could find the right artist for it, I might be interested in doing it. A few months went by, and I heard from David again. He sent me two different artists' samples, and Rick's looked like what we wanted. David and I talked over the phone and agreed that he would introduce me to Rick at a convention in Toronto that was coming up. At the convention, I talked with Rick about the things that Dave (Sim) had pointed out as weaknesses in the art. Rick agreed and said he would work on them. I was still with Aardvark-Vanaheim at the time, and I wasn't sure if this was going to go over. But I really liked the series, so I went ahead with my plans. My decision to leave AV and venture out on my own made *Wordsmith* all the more vital, as I would need at least two new series to pick up the financial slack of not publishing Cerebus. *Black Zeppelin* and *Wordsmith* may be very different in content, but they were both unique enough to be Renegade titles.

This series is just the beginning of my venture into new directions, and in some ways embodies my hopes for a new direction for the comics field. *I'm* confident that everyone will see, through this series, that comic books can rise above the prevalent fantasy element from time to time without leaving behind the ability to entertain. We are, after all, an entertainment industry above all else. I'm no expert on the pulps, but I have read a few in my day and have always enjoyed this particular style of storytelling. So don't be intimidated by that page or so of type after the story. There is far more to this book than meets the eye. Don't forget to write in with your letters of comment, either! We'd love to hear back from you!

**Special Final Note:**
July 13, 1985—a day in history when over 130 nations worked together to put on a day-long concert to fight world hunger. LIVE AID. I sat and watched most of it, astounded by the sheer number of people involved in this project, and proud of my fellow man for reaching out. We *are* a global village and we can make a difference. Don't tell me you are tired hearing about it, while 13 million people lie dying from hunger. By the time you read this, the concert will be long gone. However, the reasons for doing it will still be here. Do something! Make your time on this planet count! Organize a flea market or garage sale, support the two comic book projects that are coming out to aid in this fight. Whatever your situation, unless you contribute to help solve the problem, your apathy makes you part of the problem. There is a moral imperative involved here—because we have the means and the ability to end world hunger, if we only care enough to act! If you haven't acted yet, do so today. Send a donation, in any amount, to: USA for Africa, PO Box 7911, San Francisco CA 94120-7991

Every week another 10 million people die from hunger, so don't do it later. They need your help now. Tears are not enough.

Deni

WORD SMITH

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NO. 1 AUGUST 1985

PUBLISHER: Deni Loubert

DISTRIBUTORS

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Grass Valley CA 95945

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Collinsville IL 62234

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1112 Northeast 21st
Portland OR 97232

Subscriptions available for $12.00 per year on bi-monthly titles and $24.00 per year on Ms. Tree from Renegade Press.

Renegade Logo Design by Dave Roman

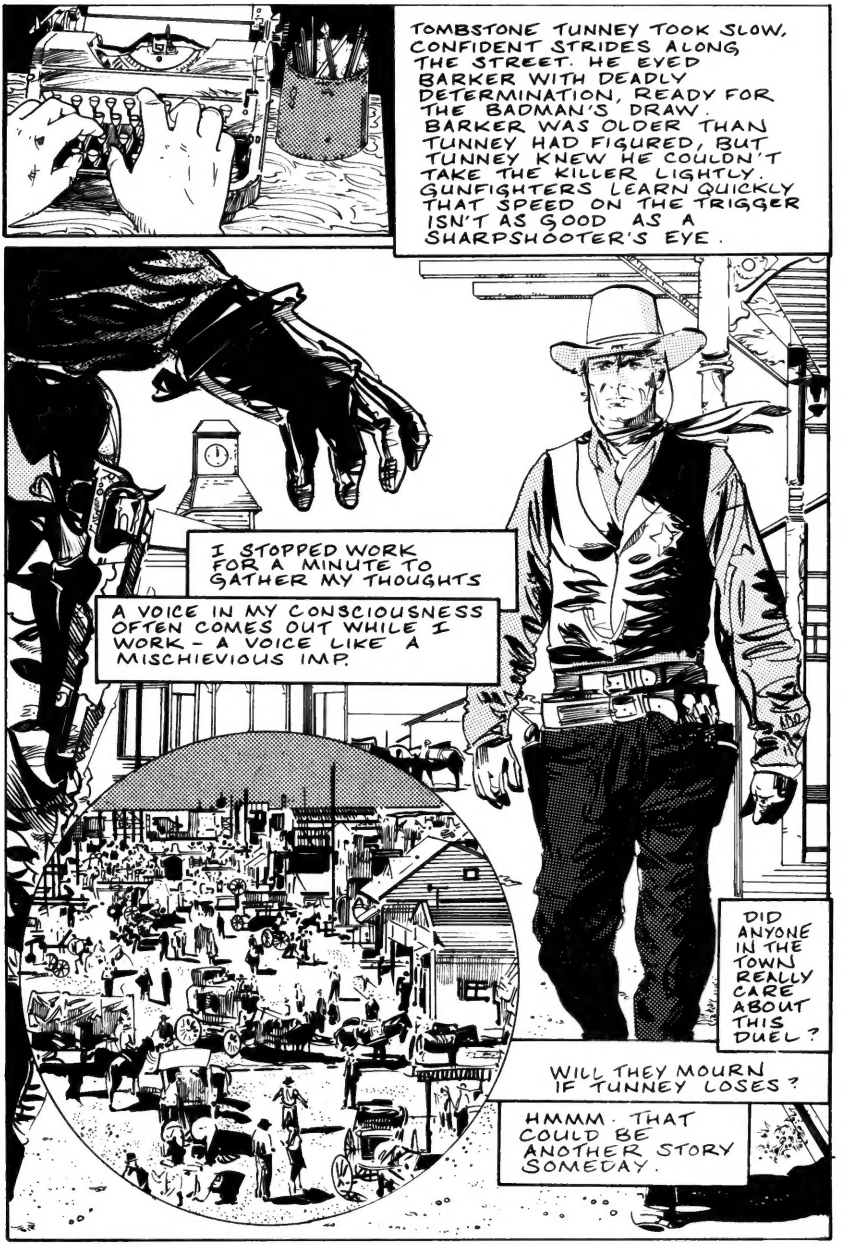
# CHAPTER ONE
# TOUGH MEN AND TENDER MOMENTS

SOMEBODY ASKED ME THE OTHER DAY WHERE I WAS WHEN THE CRASH OF '29 HIT THE COUNTRY. I TOLD THEM I WAS AT MY TYPEWRITER WORKING ON A STORY THAT, WHEN IT WAS FINISHED AND MAILED OFF, CRASHED AS BADLY AS WALL STREET.

BUT, I DON'T LIKE TO THINK ABOUT THOSE DAYS WHEN I WAS STRUGGLING TO BREAK INTO THIS BUSINESS.

I'M WORKING STEADILY NOW. LAST YEAR I HAD 450,000 WORDS PUBLISHED. THIS YEAR I WANT TO JOIN THE MILLION WORD CLUB.

**AUTHOR : DAVE DARRIGO**
**ILLUSTRATOR : R. G. TAYLOR**


TOMBSTONE TUNNEY TOOK SLOW, CONFIDENT STRIDES ALONG THE STREET. HE EYED BARKER WITH DEADLY DETERMINATION, READY FOR THE BADMAN'S DRAW. BARKER WAS OLDER THAN TUNNEY HAD FIGURED, BUT TUNNEY KNEW HE COULDN'T TAKE THE KILLER LIGHTLY. GUNFIGHTERS LEARN QUICKLY THAT SPEED ON THE TRIGGER ISN'T AS GOOD AS A SHARPSHOOTER'S EYE.
I STOPPED WORK FOR A MINUTE TO GATHER MY THOUGHTS
A VOICE IN MY CONSCIOUSNESS OFTEN COMES OUT WHILE I WORK - A VOICE LIKE A MISCHIEVIOUS IMP.
DID ANYONE IN THE TOWN REALLY CARE ABOUT THIS DUEL?
WILL THEY MOURN IF TUNNEY LOSES?
HMMM. THAT COULD BE ANOTHER STORY SOMEDAY.

OUR GOOD GUY IS SAINT GEORGE IN A TEN GALLON HAT.
OUR FAIR MAIDEN AWAITS THE OUTCOME OF THE DUEL. IF I WERE IN HER SHOES I'D HAVE A GUN READY TO SHOOT MYSELF IF THE DESPERADO WON.
OUR BAD GUY IS A REGULAR FIRE-BREATHING DRAGON.
CLICK
DRAW, OWLHOOT!
"A lightning draw brings roaring thunder!"
YEAH, I LIKE THAT!
BLAM
OUR DRAGON WON'T BE BREATHING FIRE ANYMORE.
IN FACT, HE WON'T BE BREATHING AT ALL.
OUR FAIR MAIDEN STARTS TO BREATHE AGAIN. FIRST SHE EXHALES A SIGH OF BLESSED RELIEF.

AFTER THE KISS TUNNEY CLEARED HIS THROAT AND SAID, "I THINK WE SHOULD BE WED, MISS CYNTHIA."
CRINKLE
HOLY TOLEDO! THE GUY SOUNDS LIKE HE'S AN ENGLISH ACTOR IN A BAD STAGE PLAY.
HOW DO YOU MAKE A GUY WHO'S JUST SHOT UP HALF OF ARIZONA SOUND LIKE A ROMANTIC LEADING MAN?
TUNNEY KNEW THAT THIS WOMAN WOULD BE HIS WIFE. "WE CAN GET MARRIED TOMORROW, MISS CYNTHIA," HE SAID. "IF THAT'S OKAY WITH YOU?"
NO, THAT ISN'T OKAY! NEITHER WITH HER— OR ME!
CRINKLE

CRINKLECRINKLECRINKLECRINKLECRINKLECRINKLECRINKLE
JUST HAVE HIM ASK HER TO MARRY HIM! "WILL YOU MARRY ME?" HE ASKED... HE ASKED HER — HESITANTLY. HA! NOPE, I CAN'T USE IT. GEEZ, THERE'S GOTTA BE A WAY!
MY BUTT IS SORE I'M GOING OUT FOR A WALK.
I'LL GO DOWN TO JOE'S NEWSSTAND.
I BETTER GET SOME MORE TYPING PAPER WHILE I'M OUT.

HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE PROPOSING TO EACH OTHER EVERYDAY IN THIS CITY... AND I CAN'T THINK OF ONE GOOD LINE!
There's no way I'll be the American Me
21ST STREET MISSION

UH, HEY. HEY BUDDY!

WHAT KIND OF LINE WILL I USE WHEN I PROPOSE TO CLARISSA SOMEDAY?

JOE' THE PUG WAS THERE AS USUAL. IT WAS GOOD TO SEE THE OLD MUNCHED UP PALOOKA.

'LO, JOE. HOW GOES THE BATTLE?
I'M STILL PLUGGIN' AWAY. CLAY.

25¢
BROADWAY
POPULAR
DETECT
10¢
YOU GOT THE LATEST POPULAR DETECTIVE, JOE?
YEAH. RIGHT HERE.
THERE IT IS. "GUNMEN AT MIDNIGHT," BY WILLIAM WHITTICKER. ALIAS, YOURS TRULY.
YOU GOT A STORY IN DAT ISSUE, CLAY?
YEAH. IT'S A 'BRASS-KNUCKLES BENDIX' STORY.
CRIPES! NO KIDDIN! I LOVE THAT PRIVATE DICK CHARACTER.
I DIDN'T KNOW HE'S YOURS.
YOUR PARENTS STILL GIVIN' YOU A ROUGH TIME 'BOUT YOU BEIN' IN THE DIME MAGAZINE BUSINESS, CLAY?
THEY'RE STARTING TO COME AROUND, JOE. I'M THINKING OF DOING SOME HUMAN INTEREST STORIES FOR THE PAPERS. YOU KNOW, JUST TO KEEP THE FOLKS HAPPY.

WELL, I CAN UNDERSTAND DAT. DA FOLKS JUST WANNA SEE YOUR NAME UP IN LIGHTS. NOT SOME JOKER CALLED 'WILLY WHITTICKER'
... KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
GEEZ, WHY DID I EVER HAVE TO SPILL MY GUTS TO HIM? NEXT TIME I'LL GO TO A TAVERN IF I'M IN A LONELY MOOD.
HOW'S YOUR GIRLFRIEND? YOU'VE BEEN SEEIN' HER FOR A YEAR OR TWO, HAVEN'T YA? DAT'S A LONG TIME - KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
YEAH... BOY, WE'VE BEEN HAVING SOME LOUSY WEATHER LATELY. DON'T YOU THINK SO?
ISH CAPTAIN SATAN MYSTIC ADVENTURES
HI JOE. IS THE NEW 'BLACK MASK' IN YET?
THE PHANTOM DETECTIVE
HEY GUS. I WANT YA TO MEET CLAY WASHBURN HE WRITES FOR ALL DEM PULP MAGAZINES.
YEAH?

WELL, ACTUALLY NOT ALL OF THEM. I'VE NEVER BEEN PUBLISHED IN "BLACK MASK."
IT'S BEEN A TOUGH NUT FOR ME TO CRACK.
BLACK MAS
YEAH? I'M A BIG RACE WILLIAMS FAN.
I'VE BEEN READING HIS STORIES FOR— GEEZ, IT'S GOTTA BE OVER TEN YEARS. THAT'S ONE TOUGH HOMBRE!
I LIKE SAM SPADE, MYSELF. I JUST READ THAT THEY'RE MAKING A NEW VERSION OF THAT "MALTESE FALCON" STORY IN HOLLYWOOD.*
SOMEBODY MENTION HOLLYWOOD?
I'M ALL EARS.
*"SATAN MET A LADY". 1936 · WITH BETTE DAVIS
GARY, YOU OLD DOG! I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN MONTHS.
GOOD TO SEE YOU, CLAY. STILL SLAVING AWAY FOR THOSE PENNY A WORD ROBBER BARONS?

GARY ARBOUR WAS A PAINTER. HE DID MAGAZINE COVERS TO PAY HIS RENT - AND ALSO, AS HE SAID, TO BREAK UP THE MONOTONY OF HIS STAID LANDSCAPE AND PORTRAIT WORK.
HE'D LED A SCANDALOUS LIFE. WE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH IN COMMON, YET I WAS ONE OF THE FEW PEOPLE WHO KNEW THAT HIS REAL FIRST NAME WAS GEORGE.
SO, CLAY - WHY DON'T YOU COME OVER TO MY PLACE TONIGHT?
I'M THROWING A BASH.
UH, THANKS...
I'LL TRY TO MAKE IT IF I CAN.
GOOD... AU REVOIR.
I NEED SOME ADVICE, JOE. HOW DOES A 'TOUGH HOMBRE' PROPOSE MARRIAGE?
ANY SUGGESTIONS? ...IT'S FOR A STORY I'M DOING.
YEAH. WELL HE DON'T **ASK** THE GIRL; HE **TELLS** HER. HE DON'T TAKE 'NO' FOR AN ANSWER, EITHER.
KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

WELL, JOE WASN'T MUCH HELP
"KNOW WHAT I MEAN? KNOW WHAT I MEAN?"
YEAH, JOE! I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN!
WAIT A MINUTE. MAYBE I CAN USE THAT IN THE PROPOSAL LINE...
TOMBSTONE'S GETTING OLDER NOW AND A GUNFIGHTER SURE CAN'T FIGHT AGE
YEAH, I THINK I'VE GOT IT!
THANKS, JOE!

TUNNEY STEPPED UP TO CYNTHIA. IT HAD BEEN A CLOSE SHAVE WITH THE BARBER OF FATE, BUT HE'D COME THROUGH IT IN ONE PIECE.

THE GIRL LOOKED UP AT HIM WITH A TENDER YEARNING. SHE WAITED ANXIOUSLY FOR HIM TO SPEAK.

"I'M NOT GETTING ANY YOUNGER, MISS CYNTHIA. I COULD USE A GOOD WOMAN TO LOOK AFTER THESE TIRED, OLD BONES... YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?"

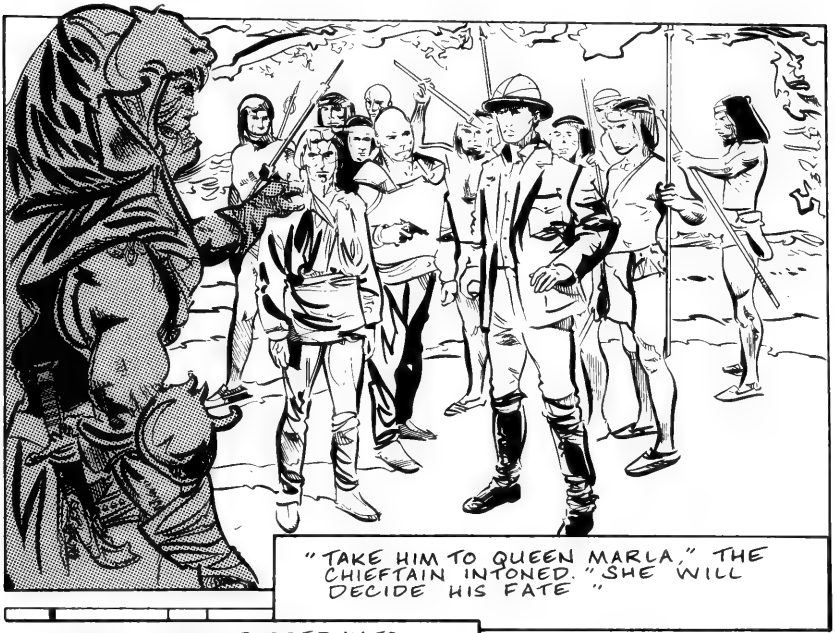
AND SO OFF THEY RIDE INTO THE SUNSET. HE PUTS AWAY HIS TIN STAR AND SIX SHOOTER. AND SHE BRINGS OUT HER BALL AND CHAIN TO ATTACH IT TO HIS ANKLE.
HALLELUJAH !!
I'M STILL TAKING TOO LONG ON THESE STORIES. I WISH I COULD CHURN OUT THE WORDS LIKE SOME OF THOSE OTHER GUYS.
I GUESS I STILL DON'T HAVE THE KNACK.
AND I PROBABLY NEVER WILL UNTIL I GET RID OF MY LITERARY PRETENSIONS.
HECK! WHY DIDN'T I ASK GARY FOR SOME PROPOSAL ADVISE? HE'S AN OLD PRO AT THAT GAME, I BET.
AND OFF SHE GOES... 'THE DEATH VALLEY SERENADE' BY ERIC REDWOOD. ALIAS, YOURS TRULY.
BAKA BO

## CHAPTER TWO
## DEATHTRAPS AND BREADLINES

CARSON THREW HIS DOCKING LINE TO THE NATIVE SIAMESE STEVEDORES. THE MAP TO THE LOST TEMPLE WAS BURNING IN HIS POCKET.

GUN DRAWN, AND HAMMER COCKED, CARSON PASSED BY THE SKELETAL WARNING.

THE WARRIORS OF THE TIGER CULT BROUGHT CARSON TO THEIR TRIBAL LEADER. CARSON STOOD THERE DEFIANTLY AWAITING THE JUDGEMENT.

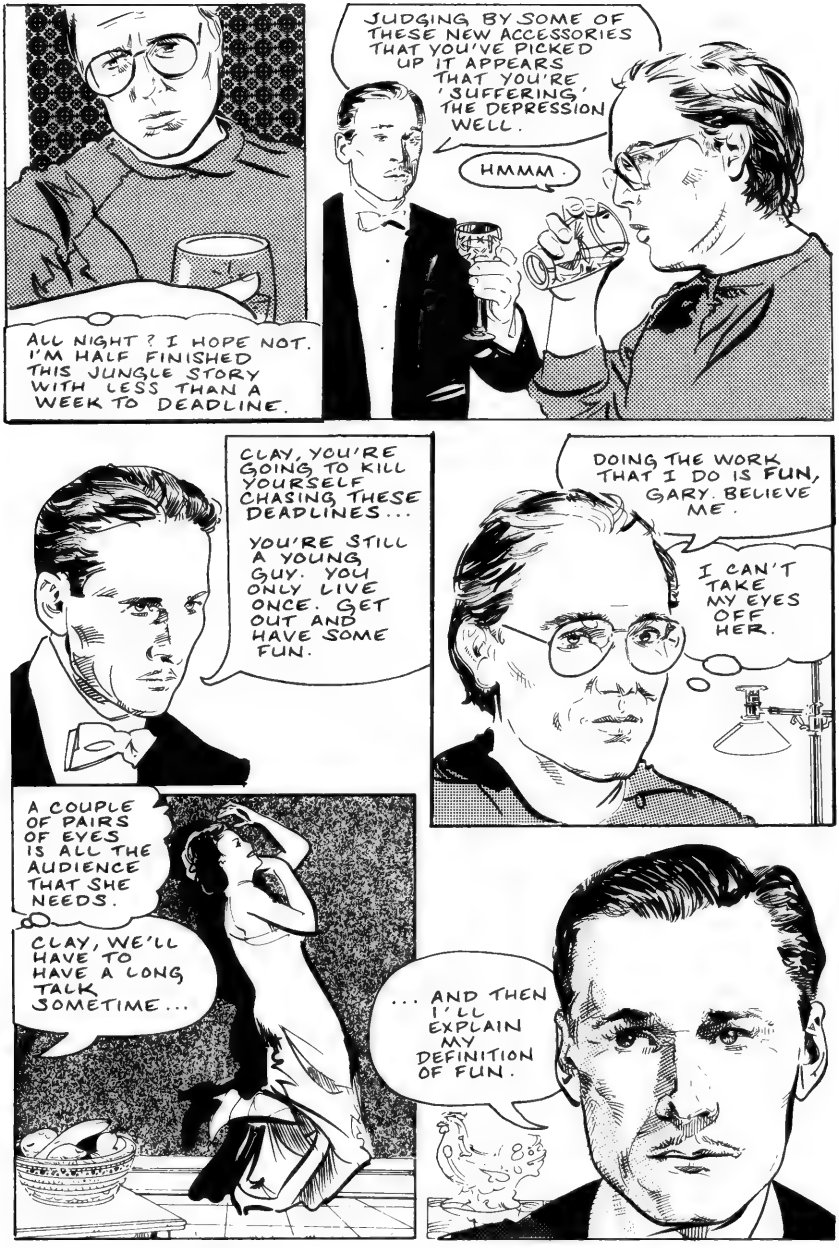



CARSON WAS PRODDED INTO THE OPULENT TEMPLE. "TAKE IT EASY WITH THAT HARPOON, SHORTY, OR I'LL USE IT TO SHAVE YOUR EARS OFF," CARSON THREATENED.

QUEEN MARLA STOOD WITH REGAL PRIDE LIKE A PICTURE OF THE SPHINX BUT THIS SPHINX COULD TALK AND GIVE OUT DEADLY ORDERS TO HER WORSHIPPERS.

"WE MUST FEED OUR ENCHANTED GUARDIAN," SHE SAID MYSTERIOUSLY.

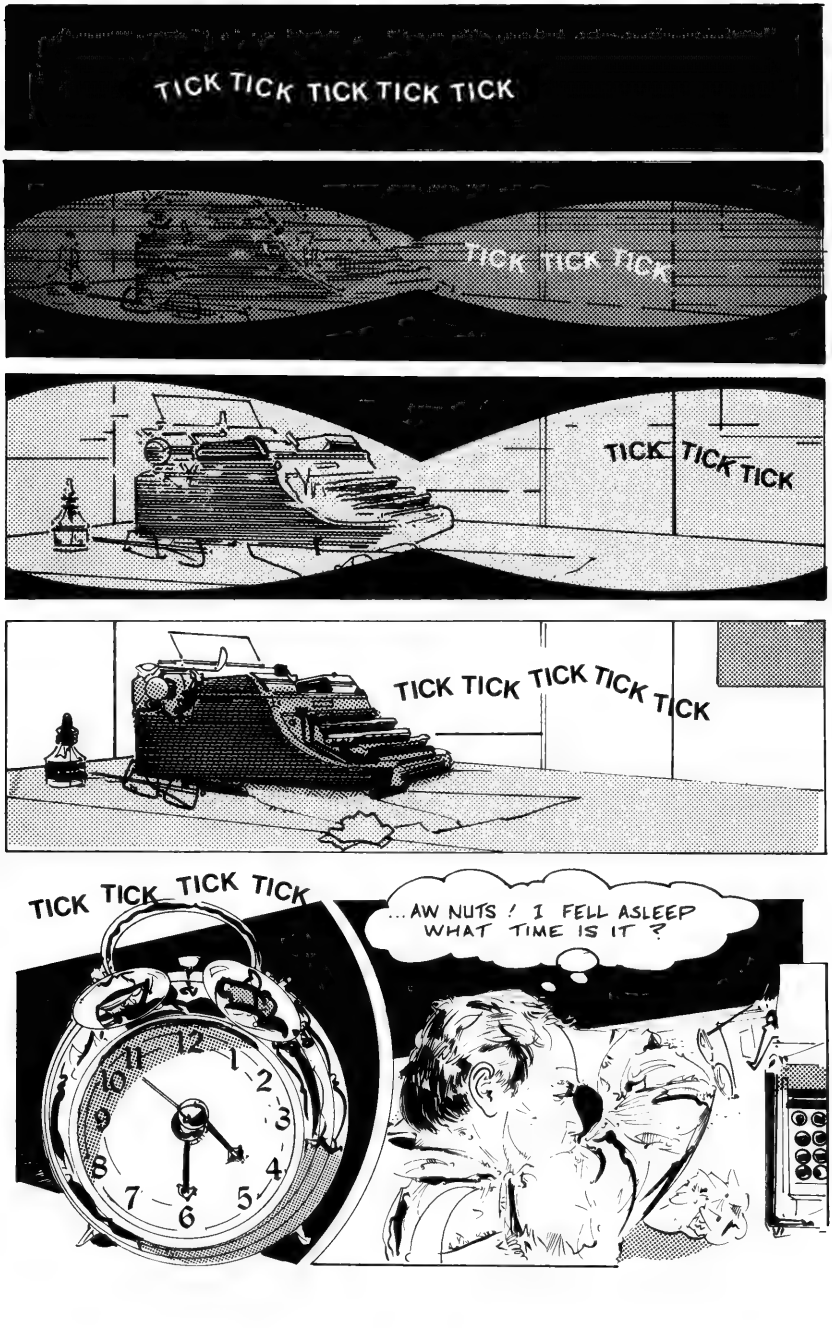
IT WAS WELL INTO THE EVENING. I WAS GOING TO PUT IN ONE MORE HOUR WITH CONGO CARSON AND THEN TURN IN.
WHO IN BLAZES IS THAT?
KNOCK KNOCK
EVENING, OLD CHAP. YOU WOULDN'T COME TO MY PARTY, SO MY PARTY COMES TO YOU... THIS IS NANCY AND THIS IS CAROL.
HI, CLAY. WE'VE GOT THE BUBBLY IF YOU'VE GOT THE GLASSES.
OH, GOOD! YOU'VE GOT A VICTROLA. AND YOU'VE GOT GEORGE GERSHWIN RECORDINGS, TOO!
GARY BROUGHT CAROL OVER FOR ME. BUT, HIS GIRL NANCY IS SO LOVELY. AND LIVELY. I COULD WATCH HER ALL NIGHT.
I got rhythm. I got music. I got my girl
Who could ask for anything more?


ALL NIGHT? I HOPE NOT. I'M HALF FINISHED THIS JUNGLE STORY WITH LESS THAN A WEEK TO DEADLINE.
JUDGING BY SOME OF THESE NEW ACCESSORIES THAT YOU'VE PICKED UP IT APPEARS THAT YOU'RE 'SUFFERING' THE DEPRESSION WELL.
HMMM.
CLAY, YOU'RE GOING TO KILL YOURSELF CHASING THESE DEADLINES...
YOU'RE STILL A YOUNG GUY. YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE. GET OUT AND HAVE SOME FUN.
DOING THE WORK THAT I DO IS FUN, GARY. BELIEVE ME.
I CAN'T TAKE MY EYES OFF HER.
A COUPLE OF PAIRS OF EYES IS ALL THE AUDIENCE THAT SHE NEEDS.
CLAY, WE'LL HAVE TO HAVE A LONG TALK SOMETIME...
... AND THEN I'LL EXPLAIN MY DEFINITION OF FUN.

GARY, PUT YOUR DRINK DOWN AND COME OVER HERE AND DANCE WITH ME.
HOW CAN I CONVINCE PEOPLE THAT I LOVE WRITING STORIES? EVER SINCE I WAS A KID I'VE WANTED TO USE MY IMAGINATION TO MAKE A LIVING. I DON'T WANT TO BE AN ORDINARY BOOK-KEEPER.
COME ON, CLAY. MY FIRST DEFINITION OF FUN IS HOLDING A WOMAN IN YOUR ARMS. GET UP AND DANCE WITH CAROL.
COME ON, SUGAR. I WON'T BITE.
YOU WILL WHEN I STEP ON YOUR TOES.
GEEZ, SHE SURE SMELLS GOOD. FEELS GOOD, TOO... GARY KNOWS WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT. BUT HE'S SO HANDSOME THE WOMEN RUN AFTER HIM. I'M JUST A POOR, FOUR-EYED SAP WHO NEEDS ALL THE HELP HE CAN GET.
GOD! I'M SWELLING IN MY PANTS...
IT'S GONNA BE A LONG NIGHT.

THE WORDS WERE FLOWING EASILY THE NEXT DAY. THEY HAVE TO WHEN THE PAY IS A PENNY A WORD.
TAP TAP TAP DING BRIIING
I HATE INTERRUPTIONS.
BRIIING RI—
IT WAS 'STOGEY' SAM KAISER, ONE OF THE MANY EDITORS WHO DISHED OUT THOSE PENNIES.
HI, SAM. I'M HALF-WAY THROUGH THE CONGO CARSON STORY.
CLAY, THERE'S BEEN A CHANGE. I NEED THE STORY IN A COUPLE OF DAYS. CAN YOU HANDLE IT?
IF I PUT IN SOME 16 HOUR DAYS! BOY, SAM. WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITHOUT ME?
OKAY. OKAY. I'M NOT STUPID. I GET THE MESSAGE. YOU CAN HAVE A CENT AND A HALF A WORD AS A BONUS.

I CONGRATULATED MYSELF ON GETTING THE BONUS AND WENT BACK TO WORK.
TAP
TAp
TAPPA
TAp
Congo Carson instinctively shook the cage trying to find a way out. Then the cage began to lower and he heard something stirring in the darkness below.
MY MIND JUMPED AHEAD AS I WROTE. OKAY, CONGO, YOU DUMMY. GET OUT OF THIS ONE!
I LOVE DESCRIBING MAN-EATING TIGERS.
CLICK
SNAP
TINK
KERCHUNK
RRRRR
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
THE BOTTOM OF THE CAGE OPENED AND.... SOUP'S ON !!!


TICK TICK TICK TICK TICK
TICK TICK TICK
TICK TICK TICK
TICK TICK TICK TICK TICK
TICK TICK TICK TICK
...AW NUTS ! I FELL ASLEEP WHAT TIME IS IT ?

OH, BROTHER. AM I BEAT!
COME ON, IT'S TIME FOR A DIP. NO, NOT THE DIP!
SHUT UP AND GET IN THE SHOWER.
A CENT AND A HALF A WORD! BOY, I'M IN THE BIG LEAGUES NOW! LOOK OUT BLACK MASK. HERE I COME!
NOW, HOW DOES CONGO GET OUT OF THE TRAP? HE DOESN'T HAVE A GUN. A KNIFE? NO... HMMM, I'VE GOT TO GET A NEW BAR OF SOAP.
HE'S GOT KNOCK-OUT GAS CAPSULES IN THE HOLLOW HEELS OF HIS BOOTS? NO!
SOMEONE COMES TO RESCUE HIM IN THE NICK OF TIME?
NO. TOO LATE FOR THAT. SHOULD'VE THOUGHT OF THAT SOONER.
COME ON CONGO! THINK! THINK! HOW DO YOU GET OUT OF THIS ONE?

HE TAKES A TORCH DOWN TO FEND OFF THE TIGER.
YEAH, THAT'S GOOD ... OKAY, WHAT NEXT?
THE CAGE! HE REALIZES THAT THE CAGE CAN PROTECT HIM!
SPWK
HE THROWS UP THE TORCH. THE ROPE CATCHES FIRE ... AND BREAKS
THUD
HIIIS
SNAP
HE STANDS UNDER THE FALLING CAGE AND IT DROPS RIGHT ON HIM!
WIIS
Thunk!
HE MANEUVRES IT OVER TO THE TUNNEL LEADING TO THE TIGER'S DEN AND CRAWLS TO SAFETY.
... YEAH, SAM WILL LOVE THIS!

THE LOUSY WEATHER HAD FINALLY PASSED. I WAS OUT WALKING TO LUNCH ONE DAY.
LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THAT SOUP-KITCHEN LINE.
HOW MUCH LONGER CAN THIS DAMN DEPRESSION GO ON ?
HEY BUDDY.
YEAH ?
CAN YA SPARE A DIME ?
HERE. TAKE TWO BITS.
GET SOMETHING GOOD TO EAT, FRIEND... YOU JUST COST ME TWENTY-FIVE WORDS. TALK MAY BE CHEAP, BUT NOWADAYS THERE'S A VALUE ON WORDS. AND THEY COST A PENNY EACH.

## Long Live The Pulps!
## A Mini-Primer by David Darrigo.

### Part One.

It's just like the old pulps, I thought to myself as I left the movie theatre after seeing 20th Century-Fox's release of 'Buckaroo Banzai' last year.

It was a shame, I also thought, that people are staying away from it in droves.

Yet, further down the street, crowds were packing into a theatre to see 'Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom' — a real movie serial for our time.

So, what's the difference between a movie serial and a 'pulpish' movie?

Well, as much as this will surprise many people, Buckaroo Banzai left me with a kind of excitement that Temple of Doom did not. Buckaroo Banzai left me with the same feeling I'd had when I first discovered Doc Savage during his re-incarnation in the sixties. It contained a filmic milieu of outlandish fun and wild, ultra-imaginative adventure. It was loaded with innocent charm and amusement as the incorruptable forces of Good fight the greedy, power-lusting plans of fiendish villains.

Buckaroo Banzai espoused the same working philosophy as the old pulps: You can't take us seriously, but you can't help from turning to the next page.

And like a 13 year old kid again I rushed out to buy the Buckaroo Banzai novel' to find out more facts about this engaging 'Doc Savage of the '80's'.

Anyone who is reading these words knows about the debt comics owe to the pulps. Former pulp heroes, writers, artists, editors and publishing houses have all appeared in our medium at one time or another. And pulp fiction by Phil Nowlan (Armaggedon 2419) which led to the Buck Rogers comic strip; and by Phillip Wylie (Gladiator) which led to the creation of Superman have been enshrined by comics historians.

It must be stressed that the comics industry did not evolve from the pulps. Obviously there is no comparison between the two forms because of the difference in the text and the illustrated mediums, but many fans believe there is a direct link from Doc Savage to Superman. The truth is that for comics to have succeeded they needed Superman more than they ever needed Doc Savage.

Certainly the earliest comics (the first that had new, non-reprint material) did contain many heroes who could have stepped out of any pulp, but it was the creation of the costumed super-hero that gave the American comic industry the impetus to develop its own unique fantasy world. If Superman and Batman had not been created at the time that they were, it is possible that comics would not have had that great spurt of imagination and success during the war years.

(I state this because comics depended largely on the studio system during the war years. That system might not have been in effect by the outbreak of U.S. involvement in the war if the industry had not grown so big during 1939 to 1941.)

The pulps could only 'boast' of one or two costumed/powered heroes. Heroes such as the Black Bat, Moon Man and the Green Lama. But it is clear that the creation, and success, of super-powered, costumed heroes separated comics from the pulps. And, for good or bad, these superheroes have dominated the infancy and adolescense of our medium.

Comics did offer a thankful refuge for many post-war pulpsters when the fiction magazine industry was depressed. In fact, DC's editorial hierarchy through the '50's and '60's was made of former pulp workers. But, this primer was not written to dwell on the demise of the pulps. It was written to set the scene for the world portrayed in the Wordsmith.

First of all you have to forget all forms fo modern, 'home' entertainment as you know them. I.e. — erase all televised images from your mind. Radio is in its prime — but transistors haven't been invented yet, therefore you can't take one around with you. And although movies are as popular as ever, with first, second and third-run theatres scattered everywhere, they share a similar fault to radio. Which is —'prime time' is at night.

So, what do you do on a lazy Sunday afternoon, in Smalltown U.S.A. and you want to exercise your imagination? Pull out a paperback? Nope, they haven't been invented yet. Pull out an 'ordinary' book? No, a book costs 2 or 3 bucks. You could live on that much money for a week. And you just might have to do that if you are one of the many who happen to lack a job.

The answer for millions of impoverished and demoralized people was the cheap, pulp dime magazine.

Popular, mass-produced fiction had first hit America through the 'Beadle' dime novels. Starting a year before the Civil War this company published pocket-sized soft-backs into the late 1930's. (Street and Smith, the most influential pulp house of the '30's, actually published these soft-backs featuring Horatio Alger Jr. and Nick Carter at the same time that they were publishing the Shadow and Doc Savage magazines.)

After World War One popular fiction came in two forms: the 'slick' magazines and the 'pulp' dime format. These terms referred to the paper stock the publishers used.

Western stories dominated the field, but the development of the new 'concrete gunslinger' known as the private eye was unique to the pulps. Carroll John Daly's 'Race Williams' was the earliest mold from which countless other hard-boiled heroes would be soon cast. He appeared in Black Mask magazine in the early 1920's.

By the mid 1930's the heroes who have become synonymous with "the Bloody Pulps" — namely the Shadow, Doc Savage, the Spider, the Phantom Detective, G-8 and his Battle Aces and Operator #5 — had exploded onto the scene. They were for kids of all ages and made many people rich.

The magazine publishing industry was centered in New York City and would-be pulp writers (or 'pulpeteers' as they were called in the business) flocked there from all over the country. Only the very best writers could send in their manuscripts from elsewhere. 'Elsewhere' being California to as far away as Europe.

The pay varied from a half-a-cent a word up to 2 cents for most of them. The average was one cent. Some of the big names got 3 or 4 cents. Very few attained the magic 5 cent mark, but several did.

It was a competitive industry — both among publishers and writers. There was room for hacks and room for quality craftsmen. You could be one or the other — but if you wanted to make a living in the field it was best if you could be good **and** fast.

Some of the pulp practioners back then are well-known today and still in print. Familiar names such as Edgar Rice Burroughs, Robert E. Howard, Earl Stanley Gardner, Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Cornell Woolrich, 'Max Brand' (alias Frederick Faust) and 'Luke Short', Edmond Hamilton and E.E. "Doc" Smith, H.P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith, Harold Lamb and Talbot Mundy.

Some other wordsmiths are known only to pulp afficionados. Such as Lester Dent, Walter Gibson, Norvell Page, Robert Hogan, Frederick Davis, Robert Bellum, Carroll John Daly and Frank Gruber.

Writer Frank Gruber (who's brief, but wonderful, memoir 'the Pulp Jungle' was an invaluable aid in the making of the Wordsmith) used an eleven point formula to construct his crime stories. Other writers were just "seat-of-the-pants" types (pun intended) who went from start to finish on instinct. And woe to the guy who got Writer's Block!

Although comics did not evolve from the pulps it can be said that paperbacks definitely did. In Part Two we'll cover the types of genres that were in the pulps and see how paperbacks were not only involved in the pulp revival of the '60's, but how the paperback industry had a pulp-renaissance of its own in the '70's.

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